



King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1080/13528165.2015.1095886](https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2015.1095886)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Kartsaki, E., & Schmidt, T. (2015). Editorial: On Repetition. *PERFORMANCE RESEARCH*, 20(5), 1-3.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2015.1095886>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

'The love of repetition is in truth the only happy love', wrote Søren Kierkegaard in 1843 in the guise of Constantin Constantius, describing his attempt to relive a love affair that was always-already lost (1964: 1). In this playful account, Kierkegaard proposes that life itself is a repetition. His pseudonymous character attempts to re-enact exactly the material conditions of a past love affair -- including going to the same theatre in order to see the same performance, sitting in the same seat, etc. -- but discovers that the only possible repetition is the repetition of impossibility.

The compulsive structure of repetition could be thought of as the necessary drive that enables us to keep going; again and again, we return to the theatre, looking for something. Like Constantius, we are convinced that our pleasures are not merely imagined; yet our imagination is always greater than reality. Our impossible satisfactions give rise to a desire for more; such satisfactions, we believe, may derive from an instance of repetition at the theatre, or the repeated act of going back, revisiting the site of performance. In our attempt to go back, we mark both the impossibility of return, but also the potential of remains. Performance disappears, yet it 'persists in recurrence, it remains unresolved, haunting our memories, documents and critical frameworks' (Heathfield 2000: 106). It remains, 'but remains *differently*' (Schneider 2001: 106).

Indeed, the idea of repetition is so central to the structure of performance that it is surprising that there is not already a volume on this topic. We might think of performance as the art of the 're': from the labour of rehearsal and systems for remembering to the broad spectrum of restored behaviours that are 'not for the first time'; from tragic scenes of recognition and reversal to conventions of citation and recitation; from the dream of representation without reproduction to the ethics of re-enactment and the care for what remains. But even if there were already such a volume, it would have to be written again. For the dynamics of repetition are intrinsic not only to the making and presentation of performance, but also to our own compulsive returns to the site of performance: our desire to see more, even as we already know that each eagerly anticipated performance will more than likely disappoint; and our need to say more about what we have seen, even as we recognise the inadequacy of our writing to capture what it was that we cared about so much. Nevertheless, we feel compelled to return, to try again; and so the present volume is yet another re-take. In doing so, we have not attempted a comprehensive survey of repetition in performance, nor to exhaust the possibilities of its conceptual resonances; instead, we have approached the journal as a curated space, creating clusters of provocations that we felt offered insights of their own but also worked productively in relation to their adjacent articles.

The first of these groupings considers the function of repetition in contexts that are not directly associated with theatrical performance: ritual, physical culture and religious recitation. Jerri Daboo explores the paradox of change via repetition as a way of approaching the Buddhist idea of *anattā* (or non-self), in which the patterns of selfhood give way to an insight into impermanence. Daboo compares this with the *rimorso* (or 're-bite') in the ritual of tarantism in southern Italy. By contrast, in Broderick

D. V. Chow's study of the Edwardian strongman George Hackenschmidt, the self is not dismantled but constructed through weightlifting and physical training -- literally, through 'reps' -- and Chow vividly draws on his own lived experience of such training regimens. Whereas a narrowly Foucaultian reading might frame such programmes within the normative strictures of biopower, Chow suggests a queer counter-reading, in which the cultivation of the body might afford a glimpse of bodily vitality as an unalienated alternative to productive labour. Between these two articles, we have placed Christopher Braddock's philosophical reflection on the practice of oral recitation of the Qur'an in Islamic traditions. Taking inspiration from a group silent recitation by New York's City Meditation Crew, Braddock argues that the emphasis on orality and liveness within Islamic tradition can be understood as embedding pluralism and the possibility of alterity within the very fabric of its religious practice.

The second grouping of articles concerns the repetitious structure of trauma and the return to the scene of catastrophe or loss -- or the impossibility of such a return. Suzanne Little offers a succinct overview of the ways in which verbatim and testimony theatre have sought to bear witness to traumatic loss, but also questions whether such tendencies might be part of a larger 'wound culture' of vicarious experience. Critically comparing two verbatim theatre pieces, Jericho House's *Katrina: A Play of New Orleans* (2009) and Version 1.0's *The Disappearances Project* (2011--13), Little differentiates between the various modes of witnessing and the different status given to testimony within these productions. An unresolved past motivates Adrian Kear's return to the scandalous violence of 'The Hooded Man' photographs from Abu Ghraib, about which Kear has already written ten years ago. Provoked and unsettled by the series *Black Smoke Rising* by artist Tim Shaw (2014), Kear returns to these images and revisits the relationship between representation and suffering, as well as the anxiety produced through the reproduction and circulation of such images -- an anxiety about representation itself. By contrast, the impossibility of return haunts the scholarly dialogue between Yana Meerzon and Natasha Davis about Davis' autobiographical performance work. The country in which Davis was born, the former Yugoslavia, no longer exists, and their dialogue places Davis' work in relation to wider questions of exilic identity.

The next cluster of articles also addresses structures of memory and re-memory as they inform the making of performance. But all three contributions to this section also deploy strategies to destabilize the status of writing in relation to the remembered event. Mary Paterson talks with Rajni Shah about Shah's trilogy of performance works, which immerse their audiences within a carefully considered structure of repetition and incremental transformation. But the written record of that dialogue, which took place over a long and circular walk, is presented so that it gives shape to the meandering loops, false starts and rearticulations that are the shape of conversation itself. Jonathan Burrows' contribution also stages a conversation, here with his own past, by fitting this current writing exactly within the structure and shape of a 2003 article Burrows co-wrote for *Performance Research*. Mimicking that earlier work's indentation, layout and typography proves an appropriate way for Burrows to describe how he and collaborator Matteo Fargion created the performance work *Body Not Fit For Purpose* (2014), in which their first decision was to work within the structure of La Folia, 'one of Europe's oldest melodies'. And in the third piece in this cluster, Tim Etchells uses the conceit of a piece of writing that has been reconstructed from fragments lost in a data crash. Rebuilding a taxonomy of the use of scores in performance, and the processes used by his company Forced Entertainment, his reanimated text occupies a curious temporality in which he simultaneously looks both forward and backward at the process of creation as always partially re-creation.

The final group of articles concerns the transmission, mimicry and reception of performance. Drawing on in-depth interviews with dancers who have worked with Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, Laure Karreman connects the demanding repetitions within Keersmaecker's work with some of the strategies deployed by the performers to teach and learn these sequences. Karreman's focus on corporeal knowledges is explicitly contrasted with the written and drawn notations recently published by the company, describing how movements and even breath might be remembered across separate bodies. Following a line from the extravagant bodies of the New York drag balls documented in *Paris is Burning* to the outrageous personae assumed by South African rap-rave group Die Antwoord, Owen Parry argues for a concept of 'fictional realness': a parodic repetition of presentational modes from popular culture. And in the final two articles in this section, both Katerina Paramana and Eirini Kartsaki reflect on their experiences as spectators with work that would not let them go. For Paramana, this is Jérôme Bel's *The Show Must Go On*, to which she keeps going back -- here to find in its 2001 premiere an alternative model of participatory spectatorship that might, Paramana argues, afford a rearticulation of sociality that disrupts the neoliberalist paradigms of its time. And for Kartsaki, it is not so much one moment to which she keeps returning but instead the impossibility of a moment at all. In the repeated steps of the dancers in Marco Berrettini's *iFeel2* (2014), Kartsaki finds an exemplary staging of Lacanian desire: an exquisite paradox, an almost impossible pleasure.

We are also grateful for the contributions to the Reviews section, which gesture to some of the gaps left in the larger issue, particularly regarding the legacies of serialism and minimalist music. Finally, we note that to love repetition is to attend to the formal properties of things, their rhythms and structures; and so across the issue we have also encouraged textual interventions that play with the form of writing itself, blurring the lines between critical reflection and mini-performances of their own. This tendency is manifest across the issue, but is particularly foregrounded in the Artist Pages between each section, which both connect and intervene within the structure of the issue. These include a meditation on repetition and duration from performance and installation artist Rachel Gomme; a collaborative collage by Anne Harris and Stacy Holman Jones that celebrates genderqueer prosthetics; a new work for camera that indexes the recurring motifs of Sheila Ghelani's interdisciplinary artwork; a visual provocation from composer Andrew Poppy that suggests a musical score but also the repetitive patterns of DNA and handwriting analysis; and Matthew Goulsh's invocation of the palinode, a poetic retraction of previous writing. And the issue begins, as well, with a kind of rewriting: Theron Schmidt's adaptation of a performance-lecture that plays with questions of originary repetition. What is it that moves us to begin? he asks (we ask). Turn the page. We have already begun.

References

- Heathfield, Adrian (2000) 'End Time Now', in A. Heathfield (ed.) *Small Acts: Performance, the millennium and the marking of time*, London: Black Dog, pp. 104--11.
- Kierkegaard, Søren (1964 [1843]) *Repetition: An essay in experimental psychology*, trans. Walter Lowrie, New York: Harper.
- Schneider, Rebecca (2001) 'Performance Remains', *Performance Research*, 6(2): 100--8.